

# Take the Fright Out of Halloween This Year With Tips for a Healthy and Safe Oct. 31

**Dover** – Halloween is frighteningly close. While most young children are excited to dress up in costume and see how much candy they will get, this annual event can also bring some anxiety to parents. Between concerns about sugar overload, making sure children and their candy supply are safe, and how your pets may react, it takes some serious planning to be ready for Halloween.

## Healthy Treats



Vegetable chips

Visions of all that sugar causing tooth decay and adding unnecessary pounds to both kids' and adults' waistlines can be scary. Additionally, children with juvenile diabetes who need to manage their sugar and carb consumption may not be as thrilled to get a ton of chocolate. But there are pre-sealed healthy alternatives available for those who want to dish out more nutritionally balanced snacks instead of candy that will still satisfy a child's sweet tooth:

- Mini bags of fresh fruit and vegetables such as apples,

- raisins, grapes, carrots, or celery;
- Mini bags of dried fruit or vegetable “chips”;
- Squeeze fruit, fruit chews, or fruit rolls;
- Mini bags of trail mix made with whole grain cereals;
- Peanut butter or apple sauce in single-serve containers;
- Individually packaged granola, cereal, soy, yogurt, and fig bars;
- Mini bags of pretzels, animal crackers, mini rice cereal or granola bars, or whole grain cheddar cheese crackers; and
- Small bottles of water;
- If candy is served, choose bite-size candy bars that are lower in fat and sugar.
- Non-food treats like pencils, crayons, glow sticks, bottles of bubbles

Remember: Whether it’s candy or a healthy sweet snack like fruit, after the snacking is done, grab your toothpaste and brush.



Girl in costume.  
Courtesy: Thinkstock

### **Tips for trick-or-treating safety:**

- Parents should walk with their children when trick-or-treating and stick to familiar neighborhoods. Do not let

them go alone. Teach children never to go into strangers' homes or cars. In case young children become lost, put a nametag with two phone numbers on their costumes. Children should know their home phone number and how to call 911.

- Choose light-colored costumes that are labeled "flame-retardant," meaning the material will not burn. Decorate costumes and bags with reflective tape or stickers and, if possible, choose light colors. Since masks can sometimes obstruct a child's vision, try non-toxic face paint and makeup whenever possible. Make sure they are appropriately sized to reduce trip and fall hazards.
- At home, turn on outside lights and remove any tripping hazards.
- Walk on well-lit sidewalks and driveways with flashlights. Use crosswalks and never assume that vehicles will stop for pedestrians. Insist that trick-or-treaters walk, not run or ride bicycles at night.
- Teens and adult drivers should learn what day and time your city/town is holding trick-or-treating hours and be especially alert for children during these times.
- Avoid candles and other flames, and unknown pets.
- Discard treats that are unsealed, have holes in the packages, are spoiled, or are homemade treats that were not made by someone you know. To prevent choking, do not allow young children to have hard candy or gum.

**And let's not forget Halloween safety for our pets:**

- Halloween can be stressful for pets. Doorbells ringing and strangers coming to their doors make some pets very anxious. All but the most social dogs and cats should be kept in a separate room away from the front door during peak trick-or-treating hours.
- Candy can cause illnesses, vomiting, and diarrhea in pets. Make sure you keep candy in a safe place out of your pets' reach. Don't let your children "share" their

Halloween treats (especially chocolate) with the family pet.

- Pet costumes are cute, but make sure it's a good fit for your animal. Make sure the costume does not limit his or her movement, sight or ability to breathe, bark or meow. Check the costume carefully for small, dangling or easily chewed-off pieces that could present a choking hazard. And if you put it on and your pet seems overly anxious, then it's best to let them be their glorious selves.
- Make sure your pet is properly identified (microchip, collar and ID tag) in case it escapes through the open door while you're distracted with trick-or-treaters.
- Keep lit candles and jack-o-lanterns out of reach of pets.

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*